

Preserving our heritage

FOR REFERENCE ONLY

BAILLY Homestead

A look at Bailly...

Why we do what we do

by Jennifer S. Youngman

Lightning flickered. Thunder boomed. During the night, the Calumet River rose higher, higher, spilled over its banks and started toward the isolated cabin where Marie Bailly and her six children were sleeping. Joseph Bailly was not with them. He was away temporarily on fur trade business.

Marie and the children, their Indian servant and John Baptiste Clutier, a family retainer, escaped to safety as the water streamed into the cabin. When the flood waters finally receded, the cabin was moved, log by log, to higher ground.

Although that cabin was all that was there in 1822 at the time of the flood, its removal to a nearby site was only the first of many changes that would be seen in the buildings on the Bailly Homestead over the years.

illustrates a "one hundred year period of one family interacting with the Calumet River, Lake Michigan and the dunes," Superintendent James R. Whitehouse stated. He pointed out that the story of the Bailly-Howe family in Northwest Indiana (three generations) begins with its relationship with Indians and continues to the initial development of steel mills here.

Sam Vaughn, environmental education specialist for the Lakeshore, describes this period as the end of an era in Northwest Indiana. The fur trade was moving west. Indians had long been hunting, fishing, planting and gathering food here. The fur trade served as "a bridge," for with the white settlement which followed came exploitation of the land and minerals: the sand, clay and soil for

wilderness were chopped down and replaced by farms and towns. Joseph and Marie Bailly were part of all this. Through their lives we can know the human side of a kind of living that happened on the very land under our feet."

Joseph and Marie are most often referred to as the first white settlers in Northwest Indiana. This claim to fame has not gone undisputed. Some people say that the Bailyys are remembered only because their granddaughter, Frances Howe, wrote a book about them. If this is the case, it does not crush their importance.

American history is the story of many individuals and families whose names will never be known. The Bailyys are important not because they are the Bailyys, but because through them we know, to some degree, what life was like for



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Today, none of the buildings appear quite the way Joseph Bailly knew them. In addition, some people don't think Joseph and Marie are very significant in American history. Why, then, is the Bailly Homestead part of a national park? Why is it on the National Register of Historic Places?

The significance of the Bailly Homestead lies in what it represents. "There are many areas in the Park Service that do not commemorate famous people," explained Larry Waldron, chief of interpretation at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. "They commemorate a way of life."

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Miles upon miles of wooded the many equally important, nameless people who helped shape American history.

Kathleen Zmuda states that the Bailly family represents the roots of family loyalty, independent business ventures, and the importance placed on education in America. She notes that the death of Indians, beavers and forest is also part of our heritage.

But here the Bailly family emerges from the typical patterns of early life. Joseph and Marie lived in harmony with the Indians, who were welcomed at their homestead. They even provided a storehouse in which Indians kept

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Bailly Homestead typifies the nameless

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their belongings while away hunting. In this case the Baillys are significant for breaking away from the norm.

Preserving the Bailly Homestead reflects the current trend toward protecting more typical, less momentous representations of our past. For a long time, according to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, an independent agency of the Executive branch of the Federal Government, historic preservation concerned itself with saving mansions of the wealthy, battlefields and other structures and sites somewhat removed from "the mainstream of national life." More recently, however, greater interest has been taken in preserving properties that typify all aspects of our heritage and contribute to quality of life in America.

The National Park Service is in the business of maintaining quality of life in America. Since acquisition of the Bailly Homestead by the

NPS in 1971, the exteriors of all buildings have been restored. Restoration of the Bailly Cemetery is presently under contract to be completed by 1979.

At this time it is not known whether anything will be done with building interiors. New developments in the Lakeshore are being postponed until the General Management Plan for Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore is completed in 1979.

In addition, because the Bailly Homestead is on the National Register of Historic Places, plans for structural improvements or installation of interpretive devices must be approved by the National Park Service's regional officer, the State of Indiana Historic Preservation officer and the Advisory Council in Washington, D.C.

Little did Joseph and Marie Bailly realize, as they walked over the same ground that we cross when we visit the homestead, that their bit of land would be a special place, saved from the press of urbanization and industrialization.

BAILLY HOMESTEAD